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THE

GOOD THAT FLOWERS DO:

A GIFT FROM THE

TEACHERS AND SCHOLARS

OF THE

WARREN STREET CHAPEL.

—— Wherefore had they birth ?
To minister delight to man :
To beautify the earth :
To comfort man,—to whisper hope
Whene'er his faith is dim :
For Who so careth for the flowers
Will care much more for him !

Mary Howitt.

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THE GOOD THAT FLOWERS DO.

YOUNG FRIENDS:—

WE have heretofore sent you our little tract,—a small return for your kindness in adding to the means of making our Floral Procession successful,—as a New Year's Gift. But, having learned that many of the Sunday Schools in the country are closed during the winter, we have deferred making our annual gift, this year, until the fields have grown green again, the trees are in blossom, and the birds sing among the branches. And now we wish to talk with you in a simple way, about the lessons written all around on the earth, in the dim aisles of the woods, by the side of the running streams, and within those pleasant gardens, whose many-colored and sweet-scented treasures you so freely and kindly send to us, who dwell among brick walls, see only strips of blue sky above the narrow streets, and enjoy hardly a single green and pleasant place,—except our grand Common and our Public Garden. In a word, we would tell of the good flowers may do those who obey the direction of Jesus, and "consider the lilies."

You remember, no doubt, that sweet and melodious hymn, written by Horace Smith, in which he calls the flowers "floral apostles," and says that each cup is a *pulpit*, and each leaf a *book*. Is he not right? Are not flowers apostles, *sent* (for that is what the name implies) to teach, by their variety and loveliness, truths that are full of comfort, encouragement, and joy? From every corolla, to him who listens attentively, comes there not a voice which the *heart* hears, speaking of divine love; and on every petal, to him who has the eye to see it, is there not written the doctrine of God's kind providence?

Let us think a moment, and answer these questions. Let us tell you of the good your gifts, in midsummer, have done in the hot, crowded, and noisy city; and also hint at the truths you may learn at every step and every hour of the day.

You have helped us, on the 4th of July, for several years, to make a change in some of the streets in Boston, almost as wonderful as the changes Aladdin's lamp is said to have produced in the "Arabian Nights." When our procession moves along—a half-a-mile of loveliness—it seems as if, by some magical power, a garden, filled with happy children, was constantly springing up between the brick side-walks and right out from among the paving-stones. The way is crowded with thousands of people, who kindly open a path for us and smile upon us; and the doors and windows of all the houses are filled with pleasant faces;—for on that morning, when the flowers come along, *every body looks happy*. If you want to see streets so full of smiles as almost to put out the sunlight by their greater brightness, just take your place in one of

our processions. Now, can you reckon up how much good is done by this march of the flowers, only for an hour? It is not much, perhaps you will say, to have a thrill of pleasure pass quickly through *one* heart; or to have a smile brighten, for a moment or two, *one* countenance. No, that is not much. But, when you remember there are ten, twenty, possibly thirty thousand such thrills and smiles, to how much does the *sum total* of joy amount? That is the question; and when you answer that question, you will agree, it is worth all the trouble it costs you and ourselves to send our floral procession flowing, like a bright stream of rainbows, through the great crowd, to drive away care, and sorrow, and sin from almost every bosom, even *for a moment*, and to fill with delight the hearts of rich and poor, old and young, only as it were for an instant. Is it not a very great thing to make a great many people, for a very little while, gentle, cheerful, and happy? Well, this is what the flowers—this is what the *apostles you have sent*—have done in this city for more than ten years. Have not these, their "voiceless lips," been "living preachers" of an innocent gladness and a pure pleasure?

But, from out this general delight, let us pick one or two incidents of many that have come to our knowledge, to prove that the floral gifts from the country, quickly as they wither and fade, have come into the city as angels of mercy and teachers of truth.

Among our young friends is a lad about twelve years old, who has been sick and a cripple for several years. He cannot walk. He is seldom able to go out of doors. He has a disease in his back, sometimes so very painful

that he cannot sit up at all. He is pale and thin, but he is always bright and pleasant. A rare thing it is for George to catch a glimpse of the green grass, or of the flowers growing in their own homes. Whilst you are frolicking in the fields, or lying in shadow of the forest trees, or roaming through the verdant lanes, or sitting down on the margin of some laughing brook, he can only look out on the dusty street or the hot brick walls, and breathe the close air of the town. George loves flowers, as among his best friends. Last 4th of July he was taken in a carriage to a place where he could see the procession. He sat at a window, propped up by pillows; and, though he suffered much pain and was very tired, it was a most happy time for him. He looked and looked at the beautiful show, with eager eyes sparkling with pleasure; and, if he knew we were telling you about him, no doubt he would bid us say, that was a morning he shall never forget; then the flowers were more dear to him than ever; and that he feels that he loves, with grateful affection, all who were concerned in bestowing upon him that beautiful scene.

One bouquet, one year, came from a young heart, in which, certainly, there was no selfishness, but a most disinterested love. It spoke plainer than words of a thoughtful and modest benevolence,—a desire that others should enjoy what was forbidden to the donor. A boy, in a distant town, had been in the habit, from season to season, with his companions in the Sunday School, of contributing his mite to our floral treasure. One year he was stricken with total blindness. But, great as was his deprivation, compelled as he was to turn only sightless eye-

balls towards the light, and towards the verdant earth, and the serene and shining heavens, he did not forget *us*. When the 4th of July was at hand, he begged his sister to gather a bunch of flowers, and send them to the Chapel in his name, saying, "My gift must go as usual, for if I cannot see it, *somebody else will*."

Another donation was more touching still. It told us of the friendship of one who was an outcast from the society of the good. It told us of good and gentle feelings still existing in the bosom of the criminal; for it came from a prison. No one knew, at the time, who sent it. At last, it was found out that a man confined for some offence in a House of Correction, had contrived to procure his bunch of "buds and blossoms," and have them forwarded, to be borne along the streets by free and happy children, whilst he was shut up, for punishment, within the gloomy walls of a prison.

We might relate more anecdotes of a like kind. We might tell how, almost literally, every year chains of flowers have been woven to bind distant places together, and then draw them all to this city as a centre. Wild flowers,—delicate as finest embroidery,—forming holy words on the pure white satin banner, have come from Western Pennsylvania, to keep company with mosses and evergreens from the State of Maine, with grasses from far off meadows and marshes, and exotics from the greenhouses in the neighboring towns. A correspondence, too, of the heart, full of kind sympathies and good wishes, with flowers for the letters, has been established between our Chapel and chapels for the poor in other cities. We might, in short, almost write a book, to describe the rich

good done, in various ways, by the donations you, and other friends, have bestowed upon us: but we have already left only a little room, to remind you and ourselves of the truths that are taught, at every step, to those who, like the patriarch of old, go out into the fields to meditate.

Look at the trees and plants, as emblems of *duty*. See how they grow *upward*. See how they turn towards the *light*. See how they live in harmony and peace. Why, the common dandelion,—a beautiful flower, by the way, if we do tread it under our feet, and say it is "*only* a dandelion,"—the common dandelion is a whole family of flowerets, each perfect in itself, living on the same floor, without crowding or quarrelling. So each blade of grass keeps its own place,—every leaf of the rose lies just where, and just as, it ought. And then, too, a plant, if it is not wholly killed, how it bears suffering patiently, and at once begins to grow again, and try once more to look beautiful, and put forth blossoms, and bear fruit! And how the climbing vines cling round, and seem to support, the old and decaying trees! In all these things, and many more that you can think of, are there not hints for *us*? Are there not, on every side, at this season of the year, crowds of quiet and silent preachers, teaching us to be kind, and patient, and forbearing, and resigned,—teaching us to bear suffering, and help one another? Who will not say of the flowers, as Horace Smith says:

> Ye bright mosaics!* that with storied beauty
> The floor of nature's temple tesselate,

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* In Italy, and other places, pictures are made by putting together little stones of different colors and shades; and this sort of work is

What numerous emblems of instructive duty
Your forms create !

Let each child who reads this, try, this summer, to see how many "emblems of instructive duty" he or she can find in the woods and fields,—in the valleys and on the hills: and, before the season is ended, the truth of the poet's words will be known by a blessed experience.

Flowers are peculiar and striking proofs of God's goodness. He has not only given us useful things, but also beautiful things: and in what abundance too! He not only supplies our wants, but also adds to his bounty that which will give pleasure and delight. Our daily bread comes to us crowned with garlands. The birds sing where the corn grows: and wheat-fields undulate under the summer winds like waves of gold. Did you ever think of this?

God might have made the earth bring forth
Enough for great and small,—
The oak tree and the cedar tree,—
Without a flower at all.

But now the flowers are springing up, day and night, in the green and low valleys, on the high mountains, in sheltered nooks, as well as in our gardens, where they reward us for the care we bestow upon them. And does not this gift of wide-spread loveliness,—this overflowing all around of beauty,—does not this speak of God's love, —of the Heavenly Father's desire that his children should be happy?

At this season, you can hardly open your eyes without

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called mosaic-work. Breast-pins and ear-rings are sometimes made of it; and some of the pictures are very beautiful.

looking upon scenery full of life, and tinted with many and harmonious colors; and it will be well for you, however young, to cherish this thought. God loves, and God has made you so that you can love, beautiful things. Everywhere care is taken to give you pleasure,—pure and innocent pleasure,—if you will only learn to seek for it and value it. Pray remember this. Think how grand and beautiful the earth is: what a temple! carpeted and adorned with verdure, sprinkled all over with flowers, with mountains for its pillars,—the blue sky for its roof,—the winds murmuring through the forest, and the solemn sound of the ocean, for its music. Living in this temple, can you doubt God's goodness: or will you live here without thanking him, with obedient lives and grateful hearts, for all his gifts?

There is another lesson to be learned from the bright world around us,—and that is, how virtue may dwell always here on earth. What do the flowers and trees do before they die? They scatter abroad seeds to produce other flowers and trees. Well, here is a hint for us. Our lives are not all shut up in ourselves, and do not end with ourselves. We may pass away, and not be seen here any more by our friends and companions. But we shall leave, in the world, the marks we have made—the feelings we have expressed—the thoughts we have spoken—the deeds we have done—the effects on others of our example. We shall leave these just as the trees leave their seeds. If our works and words—if our characters—have been good and true, then, the best part of us will not die—will not be lost—after our bodies are laid in the grave. There was a celebration, a few summers since, which

proved the truth of this. One of the oldest of our Sunday Schools met in a grove to commemorate its *twenty-fifth* anniversary. It had been formed and growing for a quarter of a century! Of all the teachers present, only one or two had belonged to it—not one of the two hundred children who roamed in the woods that fine afternoon was born—at its commencement. But the speakers on that occasion referred to the founders of that school, the pastor of the church, and his friend who was its first superintendent. All agreed that it owed its success and prosperity to their exertions; that their spirit, their example, had always been in it, to keep it alive—to invite and encourage others to carry on the good work they began. The pastor and his friend had been dead several years, and, in the burial-ground, monuments were erected over their dust, to speak of their worth. And yet they were not dead to that school. Their lives, their Christian love, and devoted labors, were in it still,—giving it shape and encouragement, and cherished in the memory of many hearts.

Just so is it with all goodness. It reproduces itself. It is spread abroad in the world—the seed of virtue. Think how much of Howard, and Oberlin, and Felix Neff—how much of every Christian man and woman—how much of every kind-hearted, obedient, affectionate child—still exists in the souls and lives of those who knew them and loved them, and have tried to be like them. Think how far and wide the spirit of Jesus has been spread, and is still spreading. He called himself, you know, the "true vine;" and from the seeds that fell from that "true vine," can you tell how many other vines

have sprung up and borne fruit? Then, by every tiny flower and every noble oak—by every plant that grows and sheds its seeds to produce more plants—may we not be taught how we should make ourselves immortal blessings to the earth—how we should feel and act, so that whether remembered by name, or forgotten, we shall leave good influences behind us that can never perish?

We might go on, young friends, and speak of many,—many other lessons of duty the flowers will teach to the heart of him who observes them, and is ready to receive their instruction. But we have just looked again at three of those beautiful parables which Dr. Krummacher has written, so pleasantly to illustrate and enforce holy truths. These parables we will copy for you here; for we think you will like them better than any thing we can say.

The first is a gentle warning to the idle. It is called

THE PRECEPTS OF NATURE.

Among the disciples of Hillel, the wise preceptor of the sons of Israel, was one named Saboth, who disliked all occupation, so that he gave himself up to inactivity and sloth. But Hillel was grieved for the youth, and resolved to attempt his reformation. To this end he led him forth into the valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, where was a standing pool full of insects and reptiles and covered with green sludge and weeds. When they had reached the valley, Hillel laid down his staff and said: Let us here rest ourselves after our walk. But the youth was astonished and said: What, master, by the side of this fetid pool? Perceivest thou not what a pestilential stench arises from it?

Thou art right, my son, replied the preceptor, this pool resembles the soul of the slothful. Who can bear to tarry near such a person?

Hillel thereupon conducted the youth to an uncultivated field, whereon grew thorns and thistles which choked the salutary herbage. Then Hillel leant upon his staff and said: Behold, this field hath a good soil, capable of producing all that is useful and agreeable: but it hath been forgotten and neglected, and therefore it now bringeth forth large thistles and thorns, and poisonous plants, beneath which harbor serpents and slow-worms. I have shown thee the soul, thou now beholdest the life, of the slothful.

Then was Saboth overwhelmed with shame and repentance, and he said: Master, why dost thou conduct me to such desolate and dreary places? They are accusing emblems of my soul and life. But Hillel answered and said: As thou wouldst not listen unto me, Nature and thine own heart may correct thee.

And Saboth repented him, and thenceforth became an industrious youth. Then Hillel conducted him one day into a fine fertile valley, to the banks of a stream, which flowed in lovely meanders amid flowers and thickets. Here, said the teacher, thou mayst behold the image of an active life, such as thine now is. Nature which hath warned thee shall now also reward thee.

And my own heart, and the approbation of my excellent preceptor, said the youth with emotion.

The second parable teaches that the love and prayer of the heart, however expressed, are always acceptable to

Heaven. Perhaps it will remind you of the story—we believe it was told in one of our Chapel Tracts—of the very little girl, who, when she heard those lines of the hymn,

> "A flower, when *offered in the bud*,
> Is no vain sacrifice,—

thought they meant just what they said. So, one Sunday morning, she made an altar of moss in her garden, and laid upon it a rose-bud, and prayed to God to receive it as the offering of her heart. Whilst she was gone to meeting, the moisture in the moss and the warm sun caused the bud to open; and, when she came home, she found almost a full-blown rose. She thought her sacrifice had indeed been accepted. And was it not?

The parable is called

THE ANGEL OF THE FLOWERS.

Selim, the son of righteous parents, dwelling on Mount Tabor, in the Holy Land, had often heard of the angels who are sent down to the earth by Jehovah, to watch over little children, to minister to their happiness, and to prepare their hearts to receive the words of instruction. Therefore did Selim say in his heart: The flowers of the field have also their angel to take care of them.

And he often repaired privately to the mountain, in hopes of hearing the rustling of his wings, and his large blue eye was then fixed intently upon heaven, or rested musing on the flower-enamelled hill.

But the Angel of the Lord appeared not unto him. He doth good unseen, said the boy, and he tendeth the flowers at night, so that they blossom by day, and he

sheddeth dew upon them, and at the dawn of morning he goeth his way. Ah, how can I express my thanks to him?

After these words, Selim gathered the fairest flowers of the valley, and entwined them into a wreath; and when evening came, and the sun was setting, he went and gently laid the flowers upon the hill, and thought of the angel.

When he had done this, he returned home to his mother, Salome, and was silent in his heart. And when he went into his chamber, Salome said to him: My dear Selim, what hast thou done? Hast thou been again among thy flowers?

Yes, mother, answered the boy. I have selected the fairest in the valley, and entwined them into a wreath, that the Angel of Spring may find it this night.

Then his brother, who was older than himself, laughed, and said: Thou simpleton, if the angel fashions the flowers, he has plenty of them already, and needs none of thine. Then was Selim troubled in his heart, and he looked at his mother.

But his mother said: Be of good cheer, my dear Selim. The angel regardeth not merely the flowers, but also the heart with which thou didst entwine the wreath, and dedicate it to him. Then Selim was comforted, and he fell asleep, and the Angel of the Flowers appeared to him in a dream, and smiled kindly upon him.

And early the next morning, Selim went forth, and he came back joyfully from the hill, and said: Behold, mother, the angel hath certainly been pleased with my gift, and not despised it; for my wreath is covered with spark-

ling dew-drops, as well as the other flowers of the field.

The last parable we copy for you needs no explanation. You will see, at once, that it teaches you how highest wisdom may be learned from the humblest and commonest things. Its title is,

THE STALK OF CORN.

A father had with his son ascended a lofty mountain: here they beheld the sun rise in brilliant majesty, and before them lay the sea and the boundless distance. They saw also a tempest about the middle of the mountain, and the thunder rolled under their feet.

This scene made so strong an impression on the mind of the youth, that he loudly proclaimed the glory of the Creator. His father meanwhile held his peace.

When they had descended again into the valley, the father praised the waving corn-fields and their agreeable look. Very true, father, said his son; but yonder on the mountain, God seemed to be nearer to me, and his greatness and omnipotence were more manifestly displayed.

It was only thy senses that were more overpowered, replied the father; but if the Invisible Being dwelleth in thy heart, thou wilt discover even in a single stalk of corn his omnipotence, his wisdom, and his goodness.

The youth then plucked a stalk of wheat from the field, and said: Teach me this, father.

His father took the stalk, and said: From a decayed grain sprang the new plant which thou here seest. Dost thou herein perceive the omnipotence of him who hath

made this wonder a law of Nature? Behold, this slender stalk shoots up, and nevertheless is not broken; it is supported by these simple knots: and thus the corn waves in the field without breaking. Seest thou in this simple arrangement the wisdom of the Maker?—And now look at the full ear, and thou must be convinced of his goodness.

CIRCULAR.

The Teachers and Pupils of the Warren Street Chapel, Boston, beg leave to remind their friends, of other Schools and Churches, of the approaching Floral Procession of another year. Bouquets, Baskets, Banners, and Decorations of every kind—Branches and Wreaths of Evergreen—Moss and dried Grass—every thing, in short, that taste may select, skill prepare, or kindness offer, will be most acceptably and gratefully received at the Chapel, on or before the evening of the 3d of July.

To the more distant Schools, we would suggest, if we may, contributions of Arbor Vitæ, Balsam Fir, Hemlock, Spruce, or the Trailing Evergreens—Moss from cedars or savins—and especially every variety of Grasses, which last might be sent early in June.

A place will be reserved in the Procession for Delegates from all the Schools that forward any thing.

Boston, May, 1847.

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